

Message Text

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PAGE 01 OTTAWA 00830 070000Z

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ACTION EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5833

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ETEL, CA
SUBJ: NEW COMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY BODY AND THE
DELETION/SUBSTITUTION ISSUE IN CABLE TELEVISION

REF: OTTAWA 250 AND PREVIOUS

HOUSE OF COMMONS ON MARCH 4 GAVE SECOND READING TO BILL
C-5 WHICH WOULD MERGE THE CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION
COMMISSION (CRTC) AND THE TELECOMMUNICATION COMMITTEE OF THE
CANADIAN TRANSPORT COMMISSION INTO NEW BODY, THE
CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS
COMMISSION WHICH WILL HAVE COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC
REGULATORY RESPONSIBILITY IN COMMUNICATIONS (SEE OTTAWA
A-591, NOV 18, 1974).

2. DELETION/SUBSTITUTION POLICY FOR CABLE TV WAS NOT
REFERRED TO BUT, IN MOVING THE MEASURE, COMMUNICATIONS
MINISTER PELLETIER MADE STRONG STATEMENT IN SUPPORT
OF BROADCASTING POLICY ENUNCIATED IN 1968 ACT, AND OF
CRTC EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT THAT POLICY ACROSS THE BOARD.
HE SAID: QUOTE. HON. MEMBERS ARE ALSO AWARE THAT
SINCE 1968 THE CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION COMMISSION
HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR ISSUING THE LICENCES FOR THE
OPERATION OF BROADCASTING STATIONS, WHETHER THEY ARE
PRIVATELY OWNED OR ARE PART OF THE CANADIAN BROADCASTING
CORPORATION NETWORKS. THE COMMISSION, CONSISTING OF
FIVE FULL TIME MEMBERS AND TEN PART TIME MEMBERS, IS
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PAGE 02 OTTAWA 00830 070000Z

MORE PARTICULARLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION

OF THE BROADCASTING POLICY FOR CANADA ENUNCIATED IN SECTION 3 OF THE BOARDCASTING ACT. IT HAS TO TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS TO ENSURE THAT BROADCASTING SHOULD SERVE TO SAFE-GUARDING (SIC) AND ENRICHING CANADIAN CULTURE IN ALL ITS ASPECTS. ANOTHER OBJECTIVE OF THE COMMISSION IS TO PROVIDE, BY MEANS OF BROADCASTING, TRANSMITTING AND RECEIVING STATIONS, HIGH QUALITY SERVICE IN BOTH OFFICIAL LANGUAGES. THIS GOVERNMENT IS DETERMINED TO UPHOLD THE BROADCASTING POLICY APPROVED BY PARLIAMENT IN 1968 AND WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT ALL THE EFFORTS OF THE REGULATORY AGENCY AND OTHERS CONCERNED WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THAT POLICY. END QUOTE.

3. LATER HE ENDORSED THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PRESENT CRTC MEMBERSHIP AND ANNOUNCED THAT WHEN NEW LEGISLATION IS PUT INTO EFFECT ALL THE PRESENT MEMBERS OF CRTC WOULD BECOME MEMBERS OF THE NEW COMMISSION UNTIL THEIR RESPECTIVE TERMS OF OFFICE EXPIRE. (HE DID NOT SPECIFICALLY REFER TO CHAIRMAN PIERRE JUNEAU, BUT THERE IS A WIDESPREAD EXPECTATION THAT HE WILL HEAD THE NEW BODY IF HE WANTS THE JOB).

4. DEBATE WHICH LASTED SEVERAL HOURS WAS LIVELY AND BILL APPROPRIATELY REFERRED TO COMMITTEE. NO OPPOSITION SPEAKER BROUGHT UP THE DELETION/ SUBSTITUTION POLICY OR REFERRED PSEIIFCALLY TO FOREIGN BROADCASTING ALTHOUGH THERE WERE FREQUENT REFERENCES TO THE ROLE OF BROADCASTING AND COMMUNICATIONS IN FOSTERING CANADIAN NATIONALISM AND IDENTITY.

5. GENERAL FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL RELATIONS IN COMMUNICATIONS, THE QUEBEC INTEREST IN REGULATING BROADCASTING AND CABLE SYSTEMS, THE ADEUACY OF THE CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION, AND TELEPHONE RATES WERE THE MAIN ISSUES RAISED BY OPPOSITION SPEAKERS. INTERESTINGLY, THE QUEBEC CONSERVATIVE CLAUDE WAGNER, REFERRING TO THE FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL QUESTION AS IT AFFECTS QUEBEC, NOTED THE CRTC VIEW OF FEDERAL SUPREMACY AND CITED AGAINST THIS THE VIEW UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 OTTAWA 00830 070000Z

OF GORDON HENDERSON (THE TRAIL ATTORNEY IN THE RECENT COURT CASES BRUGHT BY THE BUFFALO STATIONS) "THAT THE EXISTING BROADCASTING ACT DOES NOT BEAR A CLEAR MENTION OF THE FEDERAL JURISDICTION ON CABLEVISION." THIS PROVOKED MINISTER PELLETIER TO INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING REJOINDER IN HIS FINAL STATEMENT BEFORE DEBATE WAS CLOSED: QUOTE. AND WHEN THE HON. MEMBER FOR SAINT-HYACINTHE PUT FORWARD THE

TESTIMONY OF MR. HENDERSON AGAINST THE FEDERAL JURISDICTION WITH RESPECT TO COMMUNICATIONS, I WONDER IF HE REALIZES THAT HIS SURCE WAS THE GREAT SUPPORTER OF AMERICAN INTERESTS VERSUS CANADIAN BROADCASTING IN A RECENT CASE BEFORE THE FEDERAL COURT. END QUOTE.

6. COMMENT: FULL TEXT OF MARCH 3 DEBATE BEING FORWARDED BY AIRGRAM. IN VIEW OF ABSENCE OF SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO DELETION/SUBSTITUTION ISSUE BY MINISTER WE WILL BE INQUIRING INTO PRESENT STATE OF GOC COMMITMENT TO CRTC ON THIS ISSUE. PORTER

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